



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
1102 SE Quince Street • PO Box 47990
Olympia, Washington 98504-7990

January 31, 2002

The Honorable Pat Thibaudeau, Chair
Senate Health & Long-Term Care Committee
201 John A. Cherberg Building
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Senator Thibaudeau:

I am writing as chair of the Committee on Children's Health and Well-Being of the Washington State Board of Health to discuss Senate Bill 6590, relating to promoting better oral health, which is scheduled for a hearing in your committee tomorrow.

The Board's list of *Recommended Children's Preventive Services: Ages Birth through 10 Years* notes the importance of oral health assessments during periodic physical exams. The Board is working with the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Department of Health, and the Department of Social and Health Services to explore how schools can encourage delivery of children's preventive services. Its model brochure, *Start Right—Start Healthy*, speaks to the importance of an oral cavity check for five-year-olds. A Board study, *Healthy to Learn: State Requirements for Child Health Examinations*, found that 23 states require health exams as a condition of K-12 enrollment. Three states require an oral health exam as part of a physician assessment, one requires an oral health assessment conducted by a dentist, and one recommends an oral health exam.

The Board's work supports the concepts contained in SB 6590: collaborative planning to promote age-appropriate oral health screening; oral health prevention training for physicians (I recommend including advanced registered nurse practitioners and physician assistants); and oral health coordinators in local health districts. In response to the Board's initiatives in this area, we have found that widespread agreement exists about the need to address children's oral health issues. What we have been told is that effective oral health programs cannot be developed and implemented without additional resources.

Thank you for your consideration of this important public health issue.

Sincerely,

Vickie Ybarra, RN, MPH
Member, State Board of Health

cc: Senator Rosemary McAuliffe
Members of the Senate Health and Long-Term Care Committee
Members of the Washington State Board of Health
Don Sloma, Washington State Board of Health
Ree Sailors, Executive Policy Division

Senator Thibaudeau

February 1, 2002

Page 2

Patty Hayes, Department of Health